



In our increasingly globalized world, American and international students and educators have a great deal they can share with each other to develop systems of practice that reflect democracy as a social institution through which the best aspects of social ingenuity are brought forth. The purpose of this presentation is to discuss an action research project investigating an online civic engagement course offered to Brazilian high school students by faculty and graduate students at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

The primary research questions we consider, per the social entrepreneurial component of the course outcomes, are as follows:

- What themes emerge from the course pedagogy that illustrate best practices in facilitating communities of practice in online courses through scaffolding and reflection?
- What evidence is there of how the students develop an understanding of moral imagination and civic engagement as they also are developing English language skills through negotiating meaning with peers and community in Brazil, community members in Brazil, and course instructors in Baltimore?
- What insights from the students' experience might inform our understanding of how they develop a pro-social, community change orientation through student-centered reflective assignments and group projects?

Data is being gathered from a number of sources to develop a holistic understanding of the transformational learning that has occurred through student participation in online assignments, discussions, and reflection. Preliminary analysis indicates that student-centered communities of practice are associated with participant efficacy and leadership development.

This action research presents an opportunity to develop invaluable insight as to the needs and growth trajectories of course participants that will help inform future courses and further research investigating and implementing critical pedagogy. The courses also promise to provide data supporting empirically-based best practices, while allowing for students' democratic growth and engagement as aspiring leaders within their communities.

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